

June 19, 1959

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT  
June 16, 1959

Others present:

Secretary Dillon  
General Goodpaster



The President said that the more that he thinks about the matter, the more impatient he becomes with the stand Mr. Macmillan has been taking on a summit meeting, and specifically on his message just received. He said he was thinking of some other kind of action he might take, for example inviting Mr. Khrushchev to come over and meet with him bilaterally. He stressed that he mentioned this just as a possibility.

Mr. Dillon handed to the President a draft text of a possible reply to Macmillan. He said Mr. Herter had just told Gromyko that the Western Ministers would give him a paper on the Western position before the meeting on the following day, and had indicated that if he were to receive no better response than heretofore, that fact would mark the end of the conference for the present.

The President said one thing is bothering him a great deal in the present situation, and that is the plan to put IRBMs in Greece. If Mexico or Cuba had been penetrated by the Communists, and then began getting arms and missiles from them, we would be bound to look on such developments with the gravest concern and in fact he thought it would be imperative for us to take positive action, even offensive military action. He could see the reason for Redstone, Corporal or Honest John missiles, which are short-range, but not IRBMs. He wondered if we were not simply being provocative, since Eastern Europe is an area of dispute in a political sense.

The point of this, the President indicated, is that perhaps we can say to Khrushchev that we will not put the IRBMs there, and see what he is willing to do on his side to improve the situation.

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At this point Ambassador Caccia was shown in to the President's office. He said he was most grateful to the President for seeing him. The President said he was glad to have the chance to talk with Caccia since he had been pondering the problem at Geneva very deeply, trying to get behind Prime Minister Macmillan's feeling to understand just what is in his mind. The President said that our Foreign Ministers are not school boys who lack authority to negotiate. They are engaged in a serious effort to find out just where we stand with the Russians and try to develop something that shows some promise for a summit meeting. He said the picture of going hat in hand to see the Russians at a summit meeting is not one that appeals to him or to the American people. He realized that the British do not want that either.

Ambassador Caccia said that the purpose of a summit meeting would be to consider how to get the Foreign Ministers meeting started up again. The President said he believes that Mr. Macmillan thinks that Khrushchev is so much the single boss that there is little use talking with anyone else. However, this denies the whole diplomatic process. So far as we are concerned, we send our Foreign Ministers over to Geneva with authority, within the limits laid down by the President, to conduct negotiations. In effect, the President said, the Foreign Ministers are the governments of their respective countries for such negotiations. The President recalled that he has constantly said we will not be bludgeoned into going to a summit meeting. The President acknowledged that he had no answer to the present situation. What troubles him most is that his greatest friend in the foreign field, Prime Minister Macmillan, seems to disagree with him in this assessment.

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The President said that Ambassador Caccia knows this country very well. He should know that our people do not believe that

weakness will lead to a solution in circumstances of this kind. He thought we would not try to send a full reply to Mr. Macmillan until he had Khrushchev's reply before him. Ambassador Caccia said he had anticipated that that would be the President's answer but wondered if there was anything he could communicate to Macmillan in the meantime.

The President recalled that Mr. Macmillan had said that if no agreement were reached at the Foreign Ministers meeting, it would be all the more necessary to hold a summit meeting. The President had disagreed and said he would not go under such circumstances. He did recognize, however, some weight to the argument that in a dictatorship no one but the dictator has power to commit the government. He did not feel that we should allow this characteristic to destroy the diplomatic process, however. Conditions are no longer the same as when Alexander and Napoleon met on the "raft in a river" to carve up Prussia. The President did believe, however, that the possibility of his meeting bilaterally with Khrushchev could be examined, if the others wanted him to do so. Ambassador Caccia said he would put this to Mr. Macmillan. The President cautioned that he would want to consider the matter with his advisers. He commented that he has given Khrushchev every chance to have a summit meeting, and is not going to say "please" to him.

Mr. Dillon commented that another alternative is to declare a recess at Geneva and meet again in a month or so. The President recognized that Mr. Macmillan may have a domestic political problem such that a recess might embarrass him if it came at this time. He did think that it would be better to recess than to break off the negotiations. The President commented that it is hard for him to see how the four chiefs of government could meet without their meeting being a summit meeting; an "informal" meeting does not seem realistic. The world would call it a summit regardless of the facade. He commented that de Gaulle seems to be even stiffer in his views than he is himself. Mr. Dillon said that de Gaulle said he would not go to a summit meeting under such circumstances but would send Debre. Ambassador Caccia said he doubted if de Gaulle would refuse to go if the President were there.



The President said he would send Mr. Macmillan a letter. He has a tremendous regard for him and doesn't want to hurt him, or harm his chances for re-election. He said he thought we had agreed on a position up at Camp David and recalled that Mr. Dulles had brought the matter up when he and the Prime Minister stopped at the hospital on the way back to Washington.

Ambassador Caccia said that Khrushchev may do what he is threatening to do and block our access to Berlin. The President said the real question then is whether we are ready to enforce our rights. He felt that this is what Khrushchev is determined to do -- to make us take a stand showing whether we are prepared to use force. Ambassador Caccia commented that Khrushchev could present the matter in a form making it very difficult to take action. He said the British public finds it difficult to take critically the question who stamps the papers. The President said we still hold the Soviets responsible, no matter what they do. He regretted that Adenauer is so afraid of anything that involves contacts with the East Germans. Mr. Dillon commented that Adenauer had softened on this to a degree at Geneva.

The President said that speaking for himself he would rather be atomized than communized. If the matter leads from stamping of cards to other things, all our rights can be gradually lost. In the present day, he thought that the only justifiable cause for war is the maintenance of freedom and rights. Summing up, he said that he would send Mr. Macmillan a message. He did not want to go into great detail until he sees what Khrushchev says. He commented that in his message to Khrushchev he had tried to be non-belligerent and added that he has tried to keep the correspondence extremely secret. Ambassador Caccia acknowledged that until the reply is received, it is very difficult to take a position. The President said the reply may simply be a long argument. We think we have been patient and non-belligerent, but this may be non-availing.

Mr. Dillon commented that Kozlov will be here in about two weeks and could perhaps be spoken to. The President said that one possibility might be for Khrushchev himself to come over and open their fair in New York. The President said he would be willing to see him in New York. He anticipated the French, British and Germans

would not object to his doing so, since he did not imagine they would be fearful that he would betray them. Ambassador Caccia said this was an interesting possibility.

Ambassador Caccia said we are assuming that the Russians do not act in the meantime if the talks recess or break down. The President said that if they challenge us we must then talk about hitting them. At this point Mr. Caccia left the meeting.

Mr. Dillon commented that Mr. Herter had showed copies of the President's letter to Khrushchev to his colleagues in Geneva. The President commented that correspondence between Heads of Government is not something that he values very highly. The only values it does have, however, is if it is kept private. The President and Mr. Dillon then edited the proposed reply to Macmillan. Next Mr. Dillon showed the President a draft message reflecting his discussion of a day or two earlier with the President on the possibility of a Western summit meeting. After some discussion the President edited this message as well. The President indicated that his thought was simply that we have here a situation which could lead to the most damaging results if each of the Western powers began to act separately.

Mr. Dillon pointed out that we cannot be surprised at the intransigence the Soviets have shown if they had Macmillan's agreement in Moscow to a summit meeting no matter what was done concerning a Foreign Ministers meeting. The President said he would be more swayed by Macmillan's stand if it were based on a statement that British interests in the Far East or elsewhere would be harmed if a summit meeting were not held. The President commented that the crux of the difficulty now is that each of the Heads of Government has publicly committed himself to a specific position regarding possible attendance at a summit meeting, and these positions differ in important respects, thus giving the Russians opportunities to divide us.

  
A. J. Goodpaster  
Brigadier General,

